

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THEME:

The pouring out of thy Spirit; satirical denunciation of idolatry; and the identification of Cyrus.

REMARKS:

This chapter continues the theme of the last, however, the last chapter closes with the dark mention of coming judgment. This chapter moves into the light of the coming Kingdom. That is the time that the Holy Spirit will be poured out, not on the Day of Pentecost, as we shall see under COMMENT, verse 3.

There is, in this chapter, a brilliant and bitter satire against idolatry which is devastating. This is the recurring theme of this particular section. The human heart has a way of turning from God to some idol. Today, we do not go after graven images, but anything to which a person gives himself, instead of to the true God, is an idol. It can be a career, the making of money, seeking for fame, pleasure, sex, alcohol, self adoration and business. These are our idols, O America!

The high point of the prophet's polemic against idolatry will come in chapter 46. There we shall have occasion to consider this subject further and to examine the real distinction between God and an idol.

The last verse of this chapter belongs obviously, to the next, and is an example that chapter divisions are not always helpful.

Chapter divisions were inserted by men long after the Bible was written. Since they are entirely man-made, they have nothing to do with the inspiration of the Scriptures. We shall see in the next chapter that the last verse of this chapter concerning Cyrus could well belong to chapter 45, from which it is presently detached.

OUTLINE:

1. **The PROMISE of the Spirit.** Verses 1-8
2. **The POLEMIC Against Idolatry.** Verses 9-20
3. **The PROMPTING to Remember the Lord.** Verses 21-27
4. **The PROPHECY Concerning Cyrus.** Verse 28

COMMENT:

Verse 1—Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

The nation Israel is still designated as a servant (et al, verses 2, 21), note also the twofold name given to the nation—Jacob and Israel. This has no reference to the division of the kingdom, but the spirit of a crooked Jacob which caused the division.

Verse 2—Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

“**Jesurun**” means “*the upright*.” This name corresponds to Israel but is in contrast to Jacob, “*the crooked*.” Jesurun occurs first in Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26 and apparently is a synonym for Israel. It is well to note that God did not choose Jacob, but Jesurun—what God could do with Jacob. God never chooses a sinner to leave him in his sin, but rather to save him from his sins.

Verse 3—For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Here we have the pouring out of the Spirit which corresponds to Joel 2:28-32.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Obviously, all of these things were not fulfilled at Pentecost. In fact, none of these things were fulfilled. All that Peter said was than it was similar to what Joel had promised.

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:16-21).

The Spirit was not poured out on all flesh at Pentecost. Only 120, then 3,000—but never “all.”

After 1900 years, it is still not “all.” It will be in the Kingdom of which both Joel and Isaiah spoke.

Verse 4—And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

This speaks of 100 percent fruit bearing in the kingdom.

Verse 5—One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

The nation Israel will confess that they belong to the Lord in that day, he will not be ashamed of the lowly name of Jacob, and will dare appropriate the lofty name of Israel. The ending of the surname will not be “-witz” or “-sky” but Israel.

Verse 6—Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

This is a dogmatic assertion concerning monotheism, notice the titles that God claims in relation to His people—“**King of Israel**” (never king of the church), also Redeemer, Lord of the heavenly hosts of uncounted myriads, Author and Finisher and He is alone in His awful majesty.

Verse 7—And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

If there is another god, let him come forward and declare the future. This is the real test.

Verse 8—Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Israel is a witness to the oneness of God. They were to bear witness to monotheism. If there were another god, surely the Omniscient God would at least have heard of him.

Verse 9—They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

Here begins the brilliant satire against idolatry. Those who make images are witnesses to the senseless character of their gods. An image does not even have the five senses of a human being. An image cannot see or hear.

Verse 10—Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is Profitable for nothing?

The people create their gods instead of their gods creating the People. This is a vain and unprofitable business.

Verse 11—Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.

Imagine men making gods—they should be ashamed.

Verse 12—The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

First of all, the artificer of metals works hard in forging a god from some metal, but this labor weakens him and reveals he is but a man. It is ironic that a poor frail man could make a god that would be strong enough to help the poor frail man.

Verse 13—The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

The workman in wood now contributes his talent and labor to making the god. First of all, the god is put on the drawing board and is measured. Imagine measuring the infinite God. When the carpenter finishes, the image looks like a man—not God. What irony!

Verse 14—He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.

The origin of a man-made god begins in the forest. It is first a tree. The god does not create the tree but vice versa.

Verse 15—Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and faileth down thereto.

The chips and scraps, from the production of a god, are used to kindle a fire for the man to warm himself and to bake bread. This is the only practical and helpful contribution that comes from the making of a god.

In fact, the scraps are more helpful than the image.

Verse 16—He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

The only pragmatic value of the idol comes from the scraps which warm the body and cook the food. This is more than the idol can do.

Verse 17—And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

This is biting satire. Actually, the idol of wood and metal constitutes the scraps which a man sets up and bows down before as his god.

Imagine calling upon this hand-made product to deliver him!

Verse 18—They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.

Men prove themselves as senseless as the idol they worship by this procedure.

Verse 19—And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, I also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

They do not realize that the warming of the body and the cooking of the meal with the wood is a good thing, but that when part of the wood is worshipped, it becomes an abomination.

Verse 20—He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Idolatry is self-deception.

Verse 21—Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

Israel is urged to turn from such atrocious acts. They are to remember that God formed them. They are not to make a god.

Verse 22—I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

God has done something no idol can do. God has redeemed Israel.

Verse 23—Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

All creation is to join in praising God because He is Israel's Redeemer—even the forest is to praise God.

Verse 24—**Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;**

God is both Redeemer and Creator.

Verse 25—**That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;**

God will bring confusion to the worldly wise who deny Him.

Verse 26—**That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof.**

Again God makes it clear that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are still in His program for the future.

Verse 27—**That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:**

A reference to the Red Sea crossing and a look into their coming deliverance.

Verse 28—**That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.**

This is a remarkable prophecy concerning Cyrus, he is named here about two centuries before he was born, he is designated as “**my shepherd**.”

This is the only instance where a pagan potentate is given such a title, he is one of the unusual pictures of Christ.

We shall develop this in the next chapter.

~ end of chapter 44 ~

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